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ROHIT, KOHLI RETURN TO SQUAD FOR AFGHANISTAN T20Is

More than a year after playing their last T20I game, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are back in squad for Afghanistan series...

NO HARDIK YET, SAMSON MAKES THE CUT

As the BCCI named the 16-member squad for the three T20Is that begin on January 11, Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav and Ruturaj Gaikwad who are still recovering from injuries are not included. Sanju Samson, who was not a part of the South Africa T20Is, has made the cut. Among the pacers who played Tests in SA, only Mukesh Kumar has been included in the squad | P13

ROHIT RESUMES CAPTAINCY IN SHORTEST FORMAT

- Rohit will resume captaincy in the format for the first time since the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal. That he and Kohli are back indicates that they may be in the scheme of things for the 2024 T20 WC
- KL Rahul, who also hasn't played T20Is since the last WC, is not included despite expressing his interest to bat in the middle-order

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AFTER 14 MONTHS, ROHIT AND KOHLI WILL PLAY A T20I FOR INDIA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

MALDIVES SUSPENDS THREE MINISTERS FOR MODI JIBE

Indian mission takes up issue with Maldives; celebs call for boycotting the island

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

(Left to right): Mariyam Shiuna, Malsha Shareef, and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid | X

THE Maldivian government on Sunday swung into damage control mode as it suspended three of its ministers — Mariyam Shiuna, Malsha Shareef, and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid — for making derogatory remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"All government officials responsible for the comments have been suspended from their posts with immediate effect," read a statement released by Maldives government spokesperson Ibrahim Khaleel. The action came after the Indian High Commission in Male raised the issue with the Maldives foreign ministry.

The ministers had used disparaging remarks against Prime Minister Modi on social media after he posted a video of him on a pristine beach in Lakshadweep. Through their repulsive posts, the ministers inferred that the Indian PM was trying to project the Union Territory as an alternative tourist destination to the Maldives.

The insulting comments created widespread outrage, with many celebrities urging people to explore other tourist destinations instead of Maldives. There were also reports of mass cancellation of Maldives bookings for the upcoming holiday season.

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar said: "Came across comments from prominent public figures from Maldives. Surprised that they are doing this to a country that sends them maximum tourists. Why should we tolerate unprovoked hate? Let us support our own tourism."

Many Maldivian leaders, including former Maldivian president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, also strongly condemned the derogatory remarks. "India has always been a good friend of Maldives," he said.

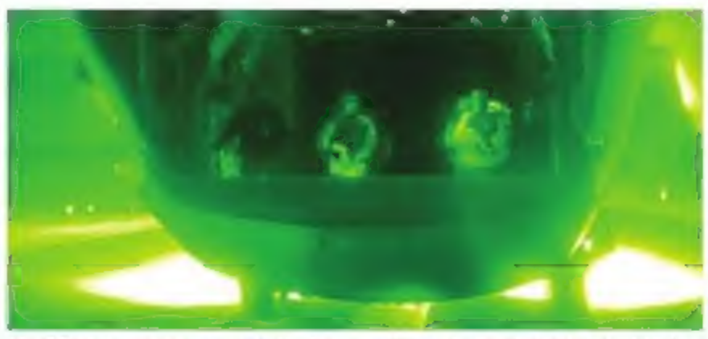
Former foreign minister Abdulla Shahid termed the comments "reprehensible and odious", noting that India is a time-tested friend who is always the first to respond in times of need.

By suspending the ministers, Maldives may have averted a major diplomatic row. The country is heavily depended on tourism and India contributes the most to its economy. Last year, over two lakh Indian tourists visited Maldives.

No hatred, negativity

The Maldivian foreign ministry said it believes freedom of expression should be expressed in ways that do not spread hatred, negativity

> We must not allow such callous remarks to negatively impact the age-old friendship between our two countries
>
> Former Maldivian president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih



The C-130J aircraft during a night-landing operation at the Kargil airstrip in Ladakh | PTI

Air Force makes first night-landing in Kargil

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

IN a demonstration of its expanding operational capabilities, the Indian Air Force (IAF) said it has successfully conducted a night-landing of C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft at the high-altitude Kargil airstrip.

"In a first, an IAF C-130 J aircraft recently carried out a night landing at the Kargil airstrip," the IAF wrote on X.

It is a significant achievement given that Kargil airstrip is situated at an altitude of 2,927 metres above sea level and is surrounded by hills and has a unidirectional approach.

To land the aircraft on the dark airstrip, the crew used night vision goggles. They also employed terrain masking en route, a technique used to avoid detection by enemy radars.

GARUD COMMANDOS ON BOARD

The transport aircraft carried elite Garud commandos on board who were on a training mission. "The exercise also dovetailed a training mission of the Garuds," the IAF wrote on X

The airstrip lies close to the Line of Control (LoC) in the Union Territory of Ladakh. It is situated near the Srinagar-Leh Highway, which was the focus of the Pakistan troops during the 1999 Kargil War.

This training exercise was to test the special operations launch capability at night. It is significant for time-critical operational mobilization of troops and equipment to carry out special operations and also in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

MORAL POLICING

Boy, cousin sister beaten up in Belagavi, 9 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

IN an incident of moral policing in Belagavi, a group of miscreants allegedly assaulted a boy and his cousin sister, who were sitting on a bench on the Fort Lake premises on Saturday.

The police have arrested nine people in this connection. A search is on for the other accused.

The injured victims have been identified as Sachin Lamani, a resident of Goundwad village, and Muskan from BK Kangrali village in Belagavi taluk.

The arrested have been identified as Mohammed Hussain Noor Ahmed Inamadar, 22, and Saif Ali Naseem Ali Mullani Ismail Magadum, 27, of Ramanagar, Atif Amhed Abdul Majeed Shaikh, 22, of Shivaji Nagar, Mohammed Aman Gulamhussain Chabuksawar of Azad Nagar, Umar Sadiq Badiger, 19, and Azan Abiden Kalkundri, 19, of Veerbhadranagar, Rihan Mohammad Gous Rotiwale, 19, of Camp, and two minor boys.

The accused dragged the victims to an abandoned shed on the Fort Lake premises and locked them there. They later assaulted them for almost three hours.

According to sources, the mothers of the victims are sisters. The father of the girl was a Muslim and died 11 years ago. P7

In Ram's name: Siddu govt tells temples to hold pooja on Jan 22

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AMID protests by BJP leaders against the arrest of a Hindu activist in Hubballi in a 1992 riot case, the Congress government in the state has issued a circular to all temples under the Endowment (Muzrai) Department to perform a special pooja on January 22 when the idol of Ram Lalla will be installed in Ayodhya.

The circular stated the idol will be installed at the newly built Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram. On this occasion, all temples under the department should perform the special pooja for the wellbeing of the people of the state and country.

Reacting to the circular, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka said Congress leaders finally bowed before Lord Ram. "This is a victory for the fight of Hindu activists. It is Hindutva's victory against vested interests," he added. Meanwhile, BJP leaders launched "Mane manege mantrakshathe abhiyan" (distribution of sacred rice) across the state on Sunday.

EXPRESS READ

YSRC MLC's brother stoned to death in AP

Kurnool: A 57-year-old mentally-ill man was stoned to death when he was asleep on a footpath at RS Pendekal village in Kurnool district late on Saturday. The victim Pujari Ramudu was brother of YSRC MLC Pothula Sunitha P7

HASINA SECURES RECORD 5th term as PM

Bangladesh's Awami League won over 200 seats in the 300-seat Parliament, while counting was still underway late on Sunday night after a day-long, violence-marred voting

BLASTS & GUNSHOTS

- Four persons, including a child, injured after two crude bombs exploded near a voting centre in Dhaka
- Two people injured after shots were fired during a clash between supporters of two rival candidates in Chattogram
- An Awami League supporter stabbed to death in Munshiganj district near Dhaka, officials said
- Two people injured in clashes between supporters of Awami League and an independent candidate in Jamalpur's Sharishabari

PTI

LOW TURNOUT

JAN 8 — When the final results will be announced

1,500 candidates from 27 political parties

100 — foreign observers, including three from India

With the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) boycotting the election, Sheikh Hasina's Awami League was expected to win. BNP has called the electoral process "a sham"

40% is the voter turnout as per initial estimates. The 2018 election saw an overall turnout of 80% | PTI

Airports, BSF on high alert as ED suspects Sheikh may flee to B'desh

PRANAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

THE Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a lookout notice for Shahjahan Sheikh, suspecting that the Trinamool leader might cross the international border into Bangladesh after Friday's attack on the agency's officials by his supporters, when the sleuths tried to search his house in connection with the foodgrain scam.

Sheikh is local leader of the Trinamool Congress. His house in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas is close to the Bangladesh border.

The central agency alerted airports and Border Security Force (BSF) authorities by circulating his photographs.

Sources in the ED said the BSF has been put on high alert about Shahjahan Sheikh. "We have information that he is planning to flee to Bangladesh. The Border Guard Bangladesh is carrying out intense patrolling because of the elections in the neighbouring country. Shahjahan may wait for a couple of days to look for right opportunity to cross over," sources said.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose instructed authorities to arrest Sheikh and investigate his alleged connection with terrorists, which drew sharp criticism from the ruling TMC.

Central Reserve Police Force personnel who accompanied the ED team during the raid were also attacked by Sheikh's men. Inspector General of CRPF, Birendra Kumar Singh on Sunday held a 30-minute meeting with the governor.

Shahjahan Sheikh

No arrests till date

The police lodged FIRs—against the ED, unruly mob who attacked the officials of the central agency and Shahjahan and his associates. No arrests have been made till now

Only 7.2% of cybercrime cases cracked in B'luru

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE number of cybercrime cases hit the alarming figure of 17,623 in Bengaluru during 2023. Of the cases, only 1,271 have been cracked. This significant difference, accounting for only a 7.2% detection rate, highlights the challenge of identifying and combating cyber threats.

As this trend persists, the question that keeps popping up is, "Will tracking cybercrimes become more difficult in the coming years, posing a bigger challenge for law enforcement and cybersecurity efforts?"

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Saidulu Adavath, who recently cracked a FedEx courier scam, said an organised network operates through a layered structure here. Those in the first layer remain oblivious to the activities of the second, with some recruited solely for making online calls, while others in a subsequent layer are tasked with creating mule bank accounts. A few more in yet another layer handle the intricate process of transferring funds across multiple banks.

He said this chain operates without the full knowledge of cybercriminals involved. It is aware of only receiving money without a clear understanding of the underlying mechanisms. In the FedEx scam investigation, a breakthrough happened when it was discovered that four of the 12 accounts were operational in Davanagere. Immediately, we initiated efforts with other departments, pinpointing the locations that led to the initial arrest of eight fraudsters, followed by four more arrests. P5

Statspeak

In 2021, of the 6,422 cybercrime cases reported, 2,257 were cracked. In 2022, of the 9,940 cases, 2,431 were cracked. In 2023, 17,623 cases were reported and only 1,271 detected

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